

# PIPES &

## Personalities

### A First In Oakland

Jonas Nordwall and Tom Hazleton captivated the audience at the Oakland Paramount on May 30 when they played the newly installed slave console in tandem with the 4/27 Wurlitzer. Helen Crawford's slave console, from the New York Paramount radio and recording studio, had been purchased by Dick Loderhose who subsequently sold it to the late Reinhold Delzer of Bismark, North Dakota. Preston "Sandy" Fleet purchased it from the estate of Mr. Delzer and donated it to the Paramount. Following the intermission, Paramount Manager Peter Botto said a few words of appreciation to Mr. Fleet, who was in the audience.

The organists played duets of Ferde Grofe's "On The Trail," a Jesse Crawford-style "High Hat" and Jacques Lemmens' "Fanfare," with the second organ part arranged by Richard Purvis, who was in the audience and with whom Tom Hazleton had studied for more than five years. Tom accompanied his charming wife, Mimi, who sang "Juliet's Waltz" from Gounod's *Romeo and*

Jonas Nordwall (standing) and Tom Hazleton at the Oakland Paramount Wurlitzer where they premiered the duet console on May 30.  
*(Scott McCue photo)*



*Juliet.* Mimi has a lovely, dramatic soprano voice.

A costumed "French Maid" appeared on stage and said she had surveyed the audience during intermission for requests, and that "The Flight of the Bumblebee" was the most-requested piece. Jonas and Tom said that they did not know it, whereupon the "Maid" replied that she did and sat down and played a stinging rendition of it. It turned out that she was JoAnn Ross, a pupil of Hazleton.

The artists' classical training was evident in their precise technique when they played J. S. Bach's "Sinfonietta of Organ Cantata No. 29," Saint-Saëns' "Danse Macabre" and a lusty "Runway Medley." Their final duet was the Berceuse and Finale from Igor Stravinsky's *Firebird*, which was magnificent. The entire program was a well-balanced and carefully planned premiere for the first dual console on the West Coast. These talented organists demonstrated their musicianship as well as a flare for showmanship and theirs will be a hard act to follow.

However, house organist Jim Roseveare and Jim Riggs are scheduled to present a two-console concert at the Oakland Paramount on January 30, 1988.

DR. EDWARD J. MULLINS

### Dwight Thomas — A Real Winner!

A featured organist at the Paramount Music Palace in Indianapolis, and winner of the 1986 ATOS Young Artist Competition, Dwight Thomas played a concert for Connecticut Valley Theatre Organ Society on April 4. Just barely into his twenties, Dwight's performance on the recently installed 3/13 Austin theatre organ in the Shelton high school was



Dwight Thomas

*(Don Feely photo)*

complete with standards, showtunes, classical, novelty and Ragtime numbers, each of which was a fully developed, original arrangement including correct verse and bridge — a musical detail missed by many current performing artists. Tempos and expression shadings were carefully controlled and always appropriate, and registrations were highly varied, yet never failed to fit the selection. In addition to his use of the 40 manual pistons and generals at his disposal, Dwight varied his tonal shadings with many hand-registered changes. The beautiful sounds we heard from the Shelton Austin are of special note inasmuch as the balances between voices sounds much different at the console than what is heard in the auditorium. Particularly outstanding were the Boellman "Toccata" and "Somewhere Out There," which produced vivid mental images of the music video for this reviewer. During and after the concert, many patrons complimented the technical crew for the sound of the instrument. The results were largely because of the skill of the organist and not any "improvements" which had been made on the organ.

A very stormy night, on top of a wet spring, had led to local flooding which necessitated an announcement by local police, toward the end of the concert, that the main roads near the high school had been closed. Dwight thus shortened his program, and while his final selections were not rousing "show stoppers," he still left the audience with a warmth which surely dried off dampened spirits.

Dwight's clean-cut good looks and his warm, friendly personality quickly won the hearts of his audience. His introductions were complete, nicely delivered and not too lengthy. From start to finish, every detail and every aspect of this quiet young gentleman was highly professional. If this concert was any indication, Dwight Thomas is headed for the top; in fact, he is already up with the top ten or so theatre organ "veterans." An opportunity to hear this young artist should not be missed.

Dwight Thomas will be featured at Shea's Buffalo Theatre during the 1987 Columbus Day Weekend Regional Convention.

ALLEN R. MILLER

JULY/AUGUST 1987

## World Wurlitzer Premiere

On the evening of May 19 a sellout crowd heard the opening concert on the St. Paul World Theater's 3/21 Wurlitzer (see May/June 1987 THEATRE ORGAN). Hosted by J. Michael Barone, of Minnesota Public Radio's *Pipedreams* fame, the opening featured the artistry of Hector Olivera.

As he traditionally does, Mr. Olivera gave a superb performance and thrilled both theatre and classical organ buffs as well as those not familiar with the organ as a concert instrument. A standing ovation attested to the reception of both artist and organ.

Chambers in the World are very shallow, with hard, brick walls. This, together with the excellent acoustics of the theatre, gives a striking brightness and presence to the organ. Tonal finishing by Terry Kleven and Bob Swaney also contributes much to the ensemble.

However, in the hours before the concert there were moments when its success seemed very doubtful. On the day before, Michael Barone and World Theater Director Marilyn Schultz brought Olivera to the theatre to witness the last frantic moments of tuning, regulating, fixing of noisy swell shutters and the like. A 4:00 p.m. promotional radio broadcast on MPR went off without incident, although the last cypher was cleared less than four minutes before air time.

Hector Olivera, fortunately, is as competent an organ builder as he is an artist, and he announced after the broadcast, "I am wearing my jeans, so where do I start?" Organ crew chief Jim Moe quickly dispatched workers to various trouble spots, and the final 16' Tuba installation, reed and Tibia regulating also commenced. Trems were set to the artist's liking, and the crew (and Hector) took care of many other problems which he noted.

After a deli-dinner the entire group returned to the theatre to resume their tasks, and the electronic crew arrived and started their final cleanup work on the Trousdale combination action. Olivera was at the console directing the operation with Gary Mertz and Dale Eason changing bad IC chips and rectifying wiring and contact problems. All involved displayed great fortitude as the organ was not pronounced ready until after 1:30 a.m.

After a short night's sleep, the crew returned for a final tuning and tonal finishing before the organ was turned over to Olivera — now as a performer — early in the afternoon. Fortunately, things went better this time, with only minor problems and an occasional cypher.

After our artist had returned to his hotel for a much-needed rest, Terry and Bob did a final touch-up on the reeds, and Jim Moe made a final check of all the other details. When he questioned Terry about the operation of the combination action, Terry's response was, "There isn't any combination action. Nothing works." The problem was quickly traced to a dead five-volt power supply, but the concert was less than three hours away! Jim made a quicker-than-reasonable, 15-mile round trip through rush hour traffic to his business

where he borrowed a lab power supply. This was quickly wired in, and a quick check indicated that everything seemed to be working properly. Unfortunately, however, none of the preset combinations for the concert had been recorded, and all were lost when the power supply died.

Olivera was contacted at his hotel, as Michael Barone was to pick him up at 7:30 (the house was to open at 7:15), and his response was, "That will be no problem. I can sneak in to the pit and set the combinations without playing — I know what they are."

Know what they were he surely did! Thirty-two pistons were deftly set in the darkness of the pit at 7:45, and at 8:05 the Wurlitzer rose from the pit into the spotlight. The concert most certainly did not reflect any of the anguish and panic that had preceded it.

For the crew, the artist and the theatre staff, the evening did not end with the final encore and ovation at the World Theater. An after-show dinner was hurriedly arranged which included a champagne toast by Marilyn Schultz and an enthusiastic thanks and wish for further success from Olivera. The crew was relieved to hear this after what they had been through earlier.

With this euphoria still prevailing, the group moved on to the Minneapolis Auditorium where the big Kimball was fired up. After building the 122-rank ensemble up to full organ and savoring the roll of sound in the cavernous hall, Olivera's reverently uttered expletive reflected the feeling of all who were in the auditorium. And with this splendid ending to a superb evening, the group finally went their various ways. All were thrilled by the events of the day and by the knowledge that the World's Wurlitzer (and, it is hoped, the Minneapolis Auditorium Kimball) will provide more such delight and inspiration in the future.

JIM MOE

## Double, Double, Toil And Trouble

A tone is doubled in a chord; a clarinetist doubles on the saxophone, features are doubled at a cinema. All these things, however, are doubled in the same place. However, when a theatre organist has booked two engagements in different cities for the same day, that could give new meaning to Shakespeare's words — double could be trouble!

Contracted to play his *King of Kings* score in Kingston, Ontario, recently, Lee Erwin discovered that he was expected to play that same score at Chaminade High School in Mineola, New York, on the same night. Double trouble! Lee knew that Jeff Weiler, in Chicago, was close enough to travel to New York, and a quick phone call found that Jeff was available and willing to cover the Mineola date leaving Lee free to fulfill his Canadian commitment.

A short time later, Lee was to learn that Jeff had double-booked a performance of *King of Kings* at the Genessee Theatre in



Jeff Weiler (left) and Lee Erwin.

Waukegan, Illinois, and a showing of *Diary of a Lost Girl* at the Music Box Theatre in Chicago. You guessed it! Lee was scheduled to appear at the Royal Oak Theatre in Detroit on the night prior to Jeff's double date, so he could easily fly to Chicago the next morning to continue the game of Musical Organ Benches that they seemed to be playing.

For those of us who love the silents and the theatre organ, it is encouraging to learn that there are enough bookings available that this could happen. Let us keep the fire burning and the cauldron bubbling with such delightful "toil and trouble."

MARLIN SWING

## Jeff Weiler In Demand

An oft-heard song of the Christmas season, the lyrics of which begin with "Oh, the weather outside is frightful," could have been appropriately vocalized by the citizens of Cedar Rapids and most of Iowa on March 29 when the weather, apparently unaware that it was spring, chose to vent driving rain, sleet, snow and biting winds for the entire weekend. Despite the weather, however, several hundred brave and hardy souls invaded the opulent beauty of the Cedar Rapids Paramount Theatre to view the C. B. De Mille classic *King of Kings* and to enjoy the accompanying musical score which was composed and performed by Mr. Jeff Weiler at the console of the Wurlitzer. This Lenten event was sponsored by area churches with all profit directed to charitable causes within the community.

Jeff's rendition was positively flawless and

Jeff Weiler receives congratulations from members of Cedar Rapids audience following his accompaniment of *King of Kings*.



added an extra depth to an already meaningful film, and many gathered at the console at the conclusion to express their praise and appreciation for his performance. This young artist is certainly to be considered as one of the up-and-coming "new breed," and any group planning an event embracing the voice of the pipe organ would do well to take a good look at Jeff Weiler.

JOHN HOCKADAY

April 12 in Waukegan, Illinois, was truly a "Sun-Day." The sun shone brightly and the music flowed effortlessly within the Genessee Theatre as the 1927 film, *King of Kings* was shown with accompaniment by Jeff Weiler. Mr. Weiler's score is exceedingly beautiful, filled with many wonderfully sonorous, original melodies, well-executed counter melodies, and smooth key changes all sensitively merged with the film. The music became part of the film, and there was no sense of time lapse between 1927 and today . . . seated in the theatre that day, it WAS 1927.

Mr. Weiler handled the theatre's Barton very well despite the fact that there were several unplayable notes, because of lack of maintenance on the part of the theatre, and some glitches from the booth. Weiler is certainly cool and calm under pressure. It is a pleasure to hear such a fine young musician using his talent in the milieu of silent film accompaniment.

KEVIN McKELVIE

*The Eagle*, starring Rudolph Valentino, Vilma Banky and the redoubtable Louise Dresser, recently had a delightful showing at the Music Box Theatre in Chicago. The reason for this delight was the marvelous organ score provided by Mr. Jeff Weiler. Contrary to the popular belief that music to silent films must be endless repetitions of "Hearts and Flowers," an original score with a real thematic unity tracing the development of plot and character is a revelation. Mr. Weiler's sensitive and individual score reflected each nuance and mood, carefully modulating the overwrought sentimentality inherent in the silent-film acting style. This reviewer, having suffered through the efforts of less talented keyboardists, realizes the importance of a well-performed *original* score to the enjoyment of one of our greatest art forms, the silent film.

BRADLEY VIETH

## Renaissance Makes Two

The Renaissance Theatre in Mansfield, Ohio, completed its second successful season this May, and the beautiful Wurlitzer has had a variety of sounds coming from its chambers.

Donna Parker came from Indianapolis to renew her friendship with our Wurlitzer — she had practiced on this console during her early years of study. Her program ranged from Helen Crawford's "So Blue" to the lively "Dizzy Fingers."

Dennis James arrived for Valentino's *Day* complete with turban and brought back Ru-

dolph Valentino in *The Sheik*. Dennis has mastered the art of accompaniment of the good old silents.

No superstition prevailed when Tom Hazleton brightened our April Friday the thirteenth. He found tones in our twenty ranks that had not been heard before, and he recalled having made his first recording on this organ when it was still in the Kearns' residence. For us Ohio Buckeyes, he really moved us by playing "How Great Thou Art" as a tribute to Woody Hayes, who had passed away that day.

Walt Strony closed the season with a concert that not only proved that he does not spend all of his time in a pizza parlor, but also that he has an excellent classical training. His footwork can tax the best speedometer. "Tico Tico" blended with "The Flight of the Bumblebee" dazzled our eyes and our ears! The evening ended all too quickly, and we hope he will come back soon.

We must congratulate our maintenance gang — they have put in many hours keeping the chambers in order, and they are becoming very good tuners! Do come and see us.

VIRGINIA E. WHITE

## Dennis James And Red Skelton

Dennis James recently performed at the Ohio Theatre as part of a sellout Red Skelton Show. He notes that he found a folio of Skelton tunes from which he assembled and performed a medley. He was surprised to learn that Red writes five musical selections each morning and has a backlog of thousands of tunes in his file. Red's compositional style is highly reminiscent of the popular music of the 1910-1930 period and, James adds, is "a natural for inclusion in theatre organ concerts."

## Happy Birthday, Hollywood

No, not Hollywood, California (which is celebrating its 100th this year), but the Hollywood Theatre in Portland, Oregon, which celebrated its 60th anniversary with a week's worth of silent films representing the early years of the theatre.

The Hollywood Theatre in Portland, Oregon, in 1927.



Dennis James and Red Skelton at the Ohio Theatre in Columbus where they performed for a sellout audience.

Opening night was a gala event featuring a "Come As Your Favorite Actor" contest, free popcorn and soda-pop, and Portland's colorful Mayor, Bud Clark, who unveiled a plaque designating the Hollywood Theatre as an historic landmark. Of course, the best part of opening night was the organ prelude and *The General*, cued by Paul Quarino on the Rodgers organ.

The week progressed with Gerry Gregorius accompanying *Seventh Heaven*, *Sunrise* and *Flesh and the Devil*. Bob Hansen accompanied *King of Kings*, *Metropolis*, *Beau Geste* and *Don Juan*. Paul Quarino also played for *Wings*.

Oregon Chapter ATOS, the Historic Preservation League, Northwest Film and Video Center, The Organ Grinder Restaurant, Rodgers Organ Company and several area merchants were responsible for the major funding and organization behind this highly successful silent film series. So successful, in fact, that we're on again for the Hollywood's 61st birthday!

TERRY ROBSON □